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President: Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Nicolae Tabacaru, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldova.

Mr. Tabacaru (Republic of Moldova): Allow me at the outset, Mr. President, to convey to you our cordial congratulations and regards on your election as President of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. I am convinced that your competence and active cooperation with United Nations Member States will pave the way for a successful and fruitful session. I would also like to express sincere thanks to your predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Namibia, for the effective manner in which he guided the work of the previous session.

At the same time, I wish to commend Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General, for his firm leadership since taking office and for his visionary and action-oriented report "We the peoples:". This report, together with the forward-looking Millennium Declaration, adopted two weeks ago at the historic Millennium Summit, sets an ambitious agenda for the United Nations for the twenty-first century.

I would also like to convey our warmest welcome to Tuvalu, the newest Member of the United Nations.

As we enter the new millennium, the prospects for the international community's evolution are marked by justified hopes, generated by the significant changes that occurred in the international arena during the last decade, yet also by hesitation and sometimes by scepticism regarding our capacity to efficiently face today's worldwide challenges. The Millennium Summit offered a unique opportunity to reflect on the global problems that confront the world today and to identify and act on the challenges ahead. It reaffirmed the ceatrality of the world Organization in addressing the global, social, security and economic needs for the benefit of people. We have ahead of us a real challenge to reshape the United Nations so that it can realize its universal goals of peace, human security, cooperation, poverty eradication and sustainable development. From this perspective, the Republic of Moldova attaches the utmost importance to the implementation of the commitments inscribed in the United Nations Millennium Declaration.

Though the international community, and in particular international organizations, makes systematic efforts aimed at resolving conflicts, we should recognize that these efforts sometimes fall short of reaching their proposed goals. Currently, on the European continent alone, we are witnessing a number of unresolved conflicts and potentially crisis-generating situations.

Democratic transformations and economic development in some South-Eastern European countries, including the Republic of Moldova, are also jeopardized by unresolved internal conflicts. In the past

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eight years we have made sustained efforts to settle the conflict in the eastern region of the country, in full compliance with the principles of international law and international practice. The mechanism of settlement, involving the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the mediating States, Russia and Ukraine, has been established. Moldova is oriented towards a complete settlement of the conflict, respecting the principle of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of my country, and at the same time granting to the region autonomous status. Despite the reasonable compromises proposed by the constitutional authorities, separatist tendencies still persist. It is an apparent peace, which distracts the attention of the international community from the imperatives of finding ways to settle the conflict and simultaneously impedes economic and democratic reforms.

The situation becomes more difficult if the fact that the region is over-militarized is taken into account. Tens of thousands of tons of munitions, armaments and equipment, sometimes accounted for and sometimes not, that are limited under the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), are deployed in the region. An early, complete and unconditional withdrawal of foreign troops, munitions and armaments, as stipulated in the OSCE Istanbul Summit documents, and as required by the CFE Treaty, would undoubtedly facilitate the peaceful and complete settlement of this conflict. I express our hope that, together with our partners, and assisted by the relevant international organizations, we will be able to ensure the implementation of the schedule for the withdrawal of foreign troops from the territory of Moldova. I would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude for the political and financial support granted by a number of States in order to facilitate the process of withdrawal and the destruction of the armaments.

Although some of the so-called frozen conflicts, at least in our region, do not appear to be getting worse, there is a growing sense of frustration that the solution is not yet within our reach. It is therefore imperative to enhance political awareness regarding unresolved or potential conflicts, with a view to actively involving the United Nations and relevant regional organizations in their settlement.

It is well known that the settlement of an ongoing conflict requires incomparably greater political, financial and moral efforts than are needed at the stage of preventing conflict. It has become obvious that United Nations mechanisms and strategies for dealing with threats to stability are inadequate. They need to be strengthened, not only to resolve conflicts and conflict situations, but, more important, to prevent them. From this perspective, the Republic of Moldova fully supports the Secretary-General's efforts to direct the United Nations strategy towards conflict prevention. We welcome the Brahimi report on peacekeeping operations. In our view the implementation of its recommendations will significantly consolidate the capacity of the United Nations in conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peace-building.

Member States should provide the Organization with the necessary support to enhance the rapid deployment capabilities of the United Nations through the involvement of the United Nations standby arrangements system. Given this context, I would like to inform the Assembly that Moldova has already established the legal and institutional framework for its future participation in peacekeeping operations and the United Nations standby arrangements system.

Disarmament and non-proliferation are essential elements of the security architecture. The Republic of Moldova, like many other countries, considers that we should continue our efforts to achieve disarmament and non-proliferation, with universal ratification of the major multilateral disarmament instruments and negotiations on biological weapons, ballistic missiles and small arms. In particular, we should reaffirm the role of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty as the cornerstone of international peace, security and strategic stability. The Republic of Moldova attaches the utmost importance also to the issue of small and light weapons, primarily to the effort to create effective international mechanisms for the prevention of their illegal transfer, especially in areas of conflict. In this respect, we are prepared to bring our contribution to the preparation of the international conference on illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, to be held next summer.

My country highly appreciates the proposals of the Secretary-General on the issues of development and poverty eradication as reflected in the millennium report and in the report on the work of the Organization submitted to the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

In conditions of globalization, which has generated profound transformations in the global economy, this issue becomes even more important, particularly for less developed States and for States with economies in transition. A United Nations system better adapted to the necessities of economic development should pay more attention to the harmonization of commercial policies, cooperation in the technological field, and the monetary policies of member States and international institutions.

In these efforts, the United Nations should enlist the support of governmental economic and financial institutions, the private sector and non-governmental organizations, thus promoting a partnership with a view to development. A redefinition of the cooperation framework and international help is needed, which should involve new strategies and investment policies. My country favours the elaboration of strategies of and measures for globalization management, and also favours the holding of a special session of the General Assembly regarding globalization and a United Nations conference on the less developed countries next year.

In order to reach sustainable development focused on the human being, there is a need to improve the partnership among developing and developed countries, international institutions and civil society. We consider that the United Nations, as a framework for international cooperation, should play a key role in supporting and coordinating national efforts. Within the framework of the United Nations development programmes and funds, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) plays a special role in human sustainable development. United Nations assistance provided through UNDP has contributed to strengthening the legal and institutional framework necessary for the continuation of countries' reforms.

Currently, the framework for cooperation between the Republic of Moldova and the United Nations Development Programme embraces approximately 40 projects in the fields of governing and democracy, environmental protection and regeneration, the protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms, the promotion of women, poverty reduction and eradication, economic and social strategies, and human sustainable development. I would also like to mention the important role of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. By promoting the dissemination and implementation of the instruments of the Commission, we would ensure the adjustment of economies in transition to international and European standards. Thus, the projects implemented by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe would contribute directly to the integration of these economies into the world economy.

The Republic of Moldova supports the activity of these institutions. We consider, however, that their financial resources should be increased and the management of resources should be more efficient. We welcome the actions undertaken by the UNDP Administrator, reflected in the Administrator's business plans, and those of the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, meant to enhance the efficiency of the activities and resource management of these important institutions. We consider that the establishment of strong positions regarding development policies, through an understanding of the characteristic conditions and specific needs of countries, would contribute significantly to the Organization's reaching its goals in this domain.

The reform of the Security Council lies at the heart of the general reform of the United Nations. It should be guided by the principles of equitable geographic representation, democracy, effectiveness, efficiency and transparency. It is on this foundation that we can modernize the composition of the Security Council and bring it into line with the substantial increase in the general membership of the United Nations since 1963, the year of the only previous reform of the Council. The Republic of Moldova pronounces itself in favour of a moderate enlargement of the Council's composition and of a reasonable increase in the number of permanent and non-permanent members which would correspond to the principle of fair geographical distribution and ensure an adequate balance between the industrialized and developing countries.

Our country also welcomes the process of revitalization and improvement of the General Assembly's efficiency and, at the same time, supports the idea of restoring the central role of the Assembly as the debating and main representative body of the United Nations. We consider that it is necessary to continue the efforts to consolidate the coordinating functions of the Economic and Social Council regarding United Nations funds and programmes. Under existing conditions it is clear that United Nations reform will continue successfully only if the

financial problems affecting the Organization's activities are solved. We support the proposals aimed at the reform of the United Nations scales of assessments, including the peacekeeping scale, taking into consideration the payment capacity of each State. Despite the difficulties it faces, my country makes every effort to reduce its United Nations budget arrears.

The evolution of the situation in the international arena in the past 55 years calls for imposes a new vision and a redefinition of the concrete mechanisms for realizing the fundamental objectives of the Organization, which spring essentially from the founding philosophy of the Charter of the United Nations. In this respect, the Organization should draw conclusions from its own past and, relying on permanent support from States, should accomplish new tasks from the perspective of adapting to the imperatives of time. We express our hope that the United Nations, which remains indispensable for the international community in the twenty-first century, will be able to impose a positive direction on this evolution.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Lee Joung-binn, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Lee Joung-binn (Republic of Korea): It gives me great delight and honour to address the General Assembly's first session of the new millennium. I would like to begin by conveying my sincere congratulations to you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of this historic session, the success of which is ensured, I believe, by the experience and wisdom you bring to this noble work. I would also like to pay tribute to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, whose dedication and leadership enabled the fifty-fourth session to lay the groundwork for the Millennium Assembly.

I also take this opportunity to warmly welcome the admission of Tuvalu to the United Nations.

Two weeks ago world leaders, including my President, gathered in this very place to rally the political will of the international community to meet the challenges of the new millennium. Their meeting of minds here in this Hall of peace, as summed up in the Millennium Declaration, reaffirmed the role of the United Nations as the embodiment of humankind's aspiration to greater peace and prosperity, to be strengthened and fulfilled through the efforts of all Member States.

It is only right that the new millennium should start with the beginning of the end of the confrontation and conflicts handed down from the past era. Such a start has been made on the Korean peninsula with the first South-North Korean summit meeting in June. As a result, inter-Korean relations have taken a definite turn for the better. The whole world stands to benefit from the liquidation of the final legacy of the cold war that the summit appears to have set in motion on the Korean peninsula.

During the June summit the two leaders engaged in an extensive discussion on peace on the Korean peninsula, South-North economic cooperation and the future of the Korean people. At the end, they announced a five-point joint declaration committing the top leaders of the two sides to steering inter-Korean relations away from tension and enmity towards reconciliation, peaceful coexistence and co-prosperity and eventual unification.

The summit is being followed up with inter-Korean ministerial meetings to work out concrete steps to implement the summit agreements. Some steps have already been taken, such as the reopening of the liaison offices at the truce village of Panmunjom and several sociocultural exchange programmes. Some are in the making — the work to reconnect the railroad between the two sides and the negotiation of the necessary legal instruments for full-scale economic exchanges, such as agreements on investment guarantees, avoidance of double taxation, settlement procedures and dispute arbitration. The third ministerial round is to be held later this month on Cheju island of South Korea.

In the latest development the two sides have agreed on a return visit to the South by Chairman Kim Jong Il at an early date. Furthermore, in a key move for tension reduction, a South-North defence ministers' meeting is to be held on 25 and 26 September, also on Cheju island.

Each of these developments stirs the hearts and minds of the Korean people. But none would match the profound emotions that were aroused in mid-August by the exchange of visits in Seoul and Pyongyang by families that have suffered the unprecedented humanitarian plight of remaining separated for half a century. It was a limited exchange involving only 100 individuals from each side, out of an estimated 10

million members of families torn apart by the national division. But further exchanges are in the planning, as are more lasting solutions to their plight.

As dramatic and hopeful as the June summit and the inter-Korean developments since then have been, only the first steps have been taken in the long process of ending the cold war and establishing a lasting peace on the Korean peninsula. We sincerely seek the abiding interest and support of the international community to see us through. In this regard, I should like to express my Government's wholehearted appreciation of the statement by the Co-Chairpersons of the Millennium Summit welcoming the inter-Korean summit and the follow-up measures.

At the dawn of a new millennium the United Nations has yet to resolve the old problems of violent conflicts that are worsening in both scope and nature. In many parts of the world, countless lives continue to be lost in armed conflicts, insurgencies and ethnic violence at regional, subregional, and intra-national levels. We, as Member States, have to rally a stronger political will to prevent a repetition of these tragedies that have happened or are happening in Rwanda, Kosovo, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

It is particularly deplorable that United Nations personnel in the field are under growing, violent attack. We urge all parties concerned to guarantee the safety and security of the peacekeeping, humanitarian and other United Nations personnel. In this regard we welcome the Brahimi report as providing a useful basis for improving the effectiveness of the peacekeeping operations activities with an adequate mandate and resources.

My Government remains fully committed to United Nations peacekeeping missions. Last year, in support of the democratic aspiration of a people, the Republic of Korea sent an infantry battalion to East Timor. Furthermore, with the economy regaining a growth momentum, we are taking steps to fulfil our pledge of an increase in our contribution to the peacekeeping operations budget. This is an expression of our firm belief that in the twenty-first century the United Nations should be better prepared and more willing to fulfil its responsibility for international peace and security.

Many leaders at the Millennium Summit spoke of the double-edged nature of the globalizing world, which brings unprecedented opportunities for economic growth on the one hand, while it further widens the disparities between the developed and developing countries, on the other. Aggravated by the digital divide of the information age, the wealth gap can become a source of unrest and instability in the world.

The Republic of Korea has actively taken on the challenges of globalization. At home we have turned the recent economic crisis into an opportunity to gear up for the knowledge-based economy of the global information age. We knew that we must emerge from the crisis not simply as we were before the crisis but in a new form fit to thrive in the age of information industries and borderless competition. Thus, bold reforms have been under way to rid the economy of past inefficiencies and to accelerate liberalization and market opening. Active Government assistance has been rendered to small and medium-venture businesses in the information sector, as well as to educating the people in computer literacy.

Government policies have combined with the intellectual vigour and adventurous spirit of the Korean people to produce the world's fastest growing Internet population — an estimated 20 million users by the end of the year out of a population of 43 million, almost 50 per cent of our entire population. While actively promoting the information age, we have also given special attention and care to those pockets of society that would fall further behind without help. Our efforts in this area have been built around the concept of "productive welfare", which aims at enabling the socially weak and enhancing the living standards of all. A key operative term is human resources development, which offers training and education to all who are willing to work.

We believe that the same concept of enabling the weak to develop their capacities should be applied in international development assistance. Thus, on the occasion of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum on Shared Prosperity and Harmony in Seoul in March this year, our President, Kim Dae-jung, urged donors to support the developing countries in their efforts to set up information centres which would provide communities with access to the Internet and other conveniences of the information age. I am very happy that the proposal is entirely consistent with the Secretary-General's initiative on the United Nations Information Technology Service (UNITeS). In addition,

my Government is increasing its assistance for human resources development in the developing economies through the dispatch of experts and invitations to trainees in the information and telecommunication fields. In particular, in collaboration with the United Nations, we have offered training opportunities to experts from African countries in export promotion. We will continue to strengthen cooperation with the United Nations to address the mounting challenges that Africa faces.

Shared values and ideals make for the strongest of the bonds that enable nations to work together beyond differences in history, ethnicity and socio-economic development. In this regard, the spread of democracy and its values in the post-cold-war era has greatly enriched the grounds for the global community to build a world of durable peace and prosperity and of dignity for all human beings. While upholding human rights and democratic values at home, democracies should cooperate to promote their universality in the global community. Thus, the Republic of Korea was happy to serve as a co-convenor for the first international conference of the Community of Democracies in Warsaw last June, and we are honoured that Korea will host the second international conference of the Community of Democracies in October 2002.

Meanwhile, to strengthen democracy at home, my Government has continued the endeavour to improve human rights laws and practices. At present we are in the process of enacting a comprehensive human rights law, which will give birth to a national human rights commission. The commission will work to improve institutional arrangements for the promotion of human rights and to raise public awareness. We are also making significant progress in enhancing the rights of women and children as well as workers. Particularly noteworthy is the creation of the Ministry of Women, due within this year, to advance gender equality.

As the new millennium opens, the challenges facing the United Nations are multifaceted and ever-diversifying. I have mentioned a few. There are many more issues, such as disarmament and sustainable development, that are equally important. However, the resources of the global body remain limited. Ongoing reform is required to enable the United Nations to meet the challenges with greater efficiency and effectiveness. Thanks to the Secretary-General's initiative, considerable achievements have been made to streamline the Organization, but there are still areas where creative input is called for. Security Council reform is one of those areas. We believe that representativeness, transparency and effectiveness must be the guiding terms in the debate for a comprehensive reform of the Council.

We do not need new concepts to describe the challenges of the new millennium. They are still the problems of peace and prosperity and the right of human beings to live with dignity. However, globalization has increased the intensity of the problems as well as the chances for their resolution. Therefore, the role of the United Nations must also be consolidated. The Government of the Republic of Korea is prepared to play an active role commensurate with its abilities to accomplish the common goals of the global community. I sincerely hope that this body will lead the way in putting the lofty spirit of the Millennium Declaration into action. In the process, my country, the Republic of Korea, heartened by the enhanced hope for its peaceful and prosperous future, will play an active part.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Panama, His Excellency Mr. José Miguel Alemán Healy.

Mr. Alemán Healy (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to convey to you, Mr. President, the warm congratulations of Her Excellency, Mireya Moscoso, President of the Republic of Panama, together with those of her Government and the people of my country, on your election to serve as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session. Your designation to guide the debates in this forum is highly gratifying to the Panamanian delegation, not only because of your own brilliant political record and your well-known devotion to the well-being of the Finnish people, but also because of the noble way in which you here represent the lofty ideals of sovereignty and universal cooperation in pursuit of world peace, sustainable human development, human rights, democracy and justice — traditional mainstays of Finland's foreign policy and of the activities of the United Nations. Panama shares with so many other States Members of the Organization your concern to put these ideals into practice, and that is what I shall be addressing today in my statement.

I am also glad to pay tribute to, and express my gratitude for, the activities of the Secretary-General,

Mr. Kofi Annan, who has devoted particular effort in the last year to the maintenance of international peace and security, the reform of the Organization, and the promotion of human rights, gender equality and the enjoyment of the rights of the child. Panama shares these and other concerns of the Secretary-General. Indeed, as the other members of the Ibero-American community are aware, upon an initiative of President Mireya Moscoso announced at Havana in November last year, the next Summit of Heads of State and Government of Ibero-America, which will take place shortly in Panama, will be dedicated to discussing the problems facing children and young people in our region. In the preparations for this meeting, which Panama has undertaken with the greatest enthusiasm, the national Government has received the support of organizations devoted to the well-being of the world's children and young people. These include the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) — a United Nations agency which has selected Panama as its new regional headquarters and to whose noteworthy activities, in fulfilment of its mandate, I am glad to pay tribute on this occasion — together with agencies responsible for promoting culture, particularly the culture of peace, including the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), another United Nations agency which has done extremely valuable work in promoting universal understanding through education, technology and communication.

With respect to gender equality, we are glad to be able to state that in recent years our country has made significant progress, particularly with respect to the political participation of women. Indeed, since 1 September last year a woman has guided the destiny of our nation. From January this year our Supreme Court of Justice has been presided over by a woman. During the review conference on women held in the context of the special session of the General Assembly in June 2000, the delegation of Panama signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which makes it possible to have recourse to an international body in case of the denial of such rights. Furthermore, Panama has made significant improvements in access for women to education and health. However, much still remains to be done, particularly with respect to equal access to economic resources. In this area, which is closely bound up with sustainable human development, my country hopes to make significant advances, particularly through international cooperation.

On this point, international cooperation, I should like to share some brief thoughts and place them before this distinguished body for consideration. More than 40 years ago one of my predecessors in the post of Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Miguel J. Moreno, addressed this General Assembly on the topic of international cooperation for development. On that occasion Minister Moreno stated:

> "Economic development, and international cooperation for the attainment of such development, are not only necessary if world peace is to be achieved, but also represent important means of cementing it and making it durable." (*A/PV.749, para. 176*)

Dr. Moreno added:

> "Social tranquillity and national political stability depend on economic development and on the benefits which the peoples derive therefrom, as do also a better understanding among the nations and international harmony; all these are indispensable for world peace." (*A/PV.749, para. 178*)

These wise words are as true today as they were when they were uttered at the thirteenth session of the General Assembly in 1958. It is this wisdom that has guided the renewed emphasis that the United Nations, in the last decade and through its United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has placed on the promotion of sustainable human development. This concept is the axis and basis of our President's governmental plan. Our Government recognizes that without measures to promote human development, economic growth can make no sense and have no meaning.

Although it may be boosted by economic growth, human development is much more than economic growth, for human development means enhancing the capacities of human beings as individuals and as members of the community by measures that provide access to emancipating education and to better health and transport services, measures to permit participation in an economy and a culture that respects human dignity, that encourage the prudent use of natural resources, and foster and enlarge the exercise of the

fundamental duties and rights of the human individual. Given this multidimensional nature and the Panamanian Government's concern to work towards sustainable human development and to promote human rights, the Panamanian delegation expresses its satisfaction at the contents of the latest UNDP human development report, which considers the link between human rights and human development. The report explains that human freedom is the common purpose and the common motivation of human rights and human development.

Mr. Aboulhasan (Kuwait), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In the years that have elapsed since our return to constitutional government our country has made significant advances. Under our Government we have begun a process of repealing legislation that restricts freedom of expression and we have invited the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, a significant regional agency, to assist us in promoting the enjoyment of human rights in Panama. Also recently, through a process of cooperation involving the major political movements in the country, we have adopted by consensus the basic elements of a Panamanian security policy based on the doctrine of human security, an extremely important component of sustainable human development. That doctrine upholds individual and grass-roots communities as constant, clear-cut points of reference for the responsibilities and purposes of the State's security strategy, and is based on taking preventive measures designed to reduce vulnerabilities and minimize the risks threatening the opportunities and rights of individuals and of communities. I am particularly gratified to be able to state that Panama is one of the few countries to have adopted the human security doctrine as a State policy. We hope that this will be a matter for more in-depth discussion and analysis at the next Summit of the Americas to be held in June 2001 in Quebec, Canada.

In the context of this and other aspects of sustainable human development and the exercise of human rights, Panama firmly believes in international cooperation and has recourse to it in order to promote the lofty objectives that are the inspiration for States Members of the United Nations. At the recent Millennium Summit, whose purpose was to set a clear course for the United Nations in the twenty-first century, Panama, among other things, called for States Members to return to the pursuit of the original spirit of the Charter of the United Nations. Pursuant to this request, it is our hope that the members of the Security Council will assume the obligation of representing the general interests of the international community instead of acting according to their individual strategic military or political interests. The general interest of the Members of the Organization indicates that the time has come to engage in debate and reach some conclusion as to the way in which we can expand the number of permanent and non-permanent members of the Security Council while restricting and regulating the use of the veto. We have expressed our agreement with the need to reform the Charter of the United Nations in order to achieve this objective and others, provided such reform is based on the principles of democracy and equitable geographic participation.

Panama wishes here and now to reaffirm its commitment to the principle of self-determination of peoples, articulated in the Charter of the United Nations, and to the use of mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of conflicts. The dangerous disputes which riddle and split our world from the China Sea to the Magreb, and which may degenerate into domestic or transboundary outbreaks of violence, must be addressed with a sense of urgency by the United Nations. This would be possible within a structured, conflict-prevention programme that provided for specialized support to nations to guide them and assist them in a fair and orderly, peaceful negotiation of their interests. Accordingly, we recommend recourse to the moral and technical presence of the United Nations within such processes, engaged in by small States beset by hostile Powers, or by racial or religious intolerances. Likewise, we recommend recourse to the United Nations in support of negotiations on reunification or self-determination that other people may wish to embark upon, with the aim of preserving a prosperous, democratic way of life or of securing for themselves the benefits of development.

The Republic of Panama nowadays is a fully sovereign State glad to have recovered the exercise of sovereignty throughout its national territory, and to have proved its resolve and ability to fulfil the commitments stemming from its participation in this great international community. Panama has the will and the capacity not only to administer efficiently and transparently its greatest asset, the Panama Canal, but also to cope successfully with the growing demands for

international maritime traffic and to ensure the security of our inter-oceanic waterway.

The Canal and the reverted lands will be the driving force behind the development of the Panamanian economy in coming years. Among other large-scale projects, we are now executing the extension of the Culebra Cut, a $1 billion investment that, once completed in the year 2001, will permit simultaneous passage of Panamax vessels through this section of the Canal. Once this work is completed, projects will be begun to expand the Canal's water basin. Moreover, consultations and studies are under way with a view to building the third set of locks, which will make it possible for the inter-oceanic waterway to be used by post-Panamax vessels and will increase the efficiency of the Canal by 25 per cent. All this will benefit world trade. Lastly, in the coming year bidding will be opened for the construction of a second bridge over the Canal in order to help unite our land, which is currently divided by the Canal.

In the lands recovered and now devoted to national development, former military installations of all kinds have been expertly retooled for commercial civilian use. Among other things, the former Albrook air base has become a centre for domestic air and land transport; the former School of the Americas has been converted into a hotel of the Meliá international chain, with its own convention centre; the Coco Solo military base, which enjoys a unique location at the Atlantic mouth of the Canal, today houses the international maritime cargo ports of Manzanillo and Coco Solo, which complement the international port of Balboa on the Pacific, all interconnected by a trans-isthmus rail system for container transport; and in the forts of Davis, Corozal and Cocolí, processing centres are now being developed for exports, with the backing of international capital.

With input from the International Financial Corporation, studies are being undertaken to convert the Howard air base into a multifunctional air and sea cargo centre for the Pacific side of the Canal. The development of the Sherman base, which is a genuine ecological gem, seeks to link the protection of the country's historical patrimony and environment with economic development. Fort Clayton is now the base of an educational and industrial complex known as the City of Knowledge, where the regional office of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for the hemisphere will be located. The City of Knowledge is also home to regional campuses of Texas A & M and McGill Universities and a continental-level regional centre for human rights. All of this will contribute to the Government's plan to make Panama a centre of international agencies.

In order to take full advantage of international cooperation, Panama has adopted a policy of strengthening its links with the various major international organizations, including those that are part of the United Nations system. In this way we are striving to move forward and contribute to worldwide peacemaking by converting former military bases into civilian and commercial areas that will enhance world peace.

This is an appropriate occasion to place on record that Panama categorically rejects the actions of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which has unilaterally devised taxation standards that its members are trying to impose outside their jurisdiction, in open violation of resolutions of the General Assembly. On this point, Panama is grateful for the support of the majority leader of the United States House of Representatives, who on 7 September wrote to the United States Secretary of the Treasury, Mr. Lawrence Summers, strongly condemning this action. There is a need for a careful examination of the flight of billions of dollars in capital from developing countries to the financial institutions of the first world which are trying to tighten the so-called qualifications that are used to exert pressure, with obvious objectives.

Panama is committed to the fight against the laundering of money stemming from drug trafficking and other unlawful activities. We believe that all countries should work together to eliminate this scourge. This effort should be carried out through legitimate mechanisms of international institutions that are representative not only of the industrialized North but also of the emerging countries of the South, such as the United Nations and the various regional organizations.

In the spirit of international cooperation, to which I previously referred, and in consideration of the most basic concepts of justice, we are today calling for the cooperation of the General Assembly in resolving a dispute between Panama and the United States of America, as a result of the bases operated by the armed forces of that country on our territory throughout the

last century. In this forum, in September last year, our President stressed her confidence that the outstanding differences surrounding this issue that still persisted between Panama and the United States would be resolved satisfactorily in a reasonable period of time. Unfortunately, despite the efforts and goodwill displayed by the Panamanian Government these differences have still not been settled.

In his powerful report entitled "We the peoples: the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century", and with respect to certain matters relating to trade, the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, proposes that States Members follow a line of conduct consonant with environmental and human rights standards. He also urges States to fulfil their obligations vis-à-vis universal values and the common standards that have emerged from countless conferences and extensive negotiations and that have taken the form of historic resolutions and conventions under the auspices of the United Nations. By extension, we believe that this appeal to States applies not only to trading matters but also to all the other aspects of relationships among nations. His profound words express the vast ethical foundation of the United Nations.

In another part of his report the Secretary-General warns of the risk that environmental degradation, among other factors, may heighten social and political tensions in an unforeseeable and potentially dangerous fashion. We are particularly gratified by this clear vision on an issue whose various facets are already having a serious impact not only on many developing nations but also on the most developed.

In view of these very wise appeals and warnings, as well as of the predominant role that the United Nations plays in the maintenance of international peace and defence of the principle of sovereignty, in a formal note, to the Secretary-General I have requested him to bring to the attention of the United Nations the failure of the United States of America to fulfil its obligations so that the Organization can assist in bringing about an early resolution of the dispute arising from the refusal of the United States to fulfil the commitments derived from the unauthorized military use by its army of significant portions of Panama's national territory. I have informed the Secretary-General of the facts and formally requested that my note be circulated as a document of the General Assembly and that it be brought to the attention of the Security Council.

I take this opportunity to wish the General Assembly a fruitful year of deliberations under the guidance of its President. I should like to express my sincere hope that this year will be one of significant, meaningful and tangible achievements for the Organization in the treatment of the most important items on its agenda, to the benefit of all mankind.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Alwi Shihab, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia.

Mr. Shihab (Indonesia): It gives me great pleasure to congratulate Mr. Holkeri on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session. I am confident that under his most able guidance we will make substantive progress in our deliberations. I also pay tribute to his predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, the esteemed Foreign Minister of Namibia, for the skilful manner in which he guided our work during a busy year.

I also take this opportunity to commend the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his report on the work of the Organization. I also take this occasion to welcome the new Member, Tuvalu, to our midst.

The fifty-fifth session opened with the historic Millennium Summit and the adoption of a visionary Declaration offering the cardinal principles that should govern relations among nations. It charted a course that, if followed, will ensure durable peace and security as well as common progress and prosperity for all humanity. It, hopefully, began a new chapter in the history of the United Nations. Undeniably, expectations are raised that the Organization will overcome the pervasive and interrelated obstacles to peace and development, while strongly reaffirming and preserving the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. We know that these goals can be achieved, but it is crucial that Member States, civil society, international organizations and the private sector cooperate and work together for that purpose.

These efforts must be supported by the empowerment of the Organization, entailing more than charting a new structure and new mechanisms, or providing additional resources. It demands a willingness to provide genuine authority and legitimacy to the United Nations by setting new norms and agendas as needed. It also urgently calls for reform of the Security Council. New prospects for that effort may have emerged in the joint statement of the Heads

of State or Government of the permanent members of the Council on 7 September. In that statement they pledged to foster a more transparent and broadly representative Council to enhance its effectiveness for peace and security.

One major issue confronting us is the lack of progress on the elimination of nuclear weapons. We are even more concerned to see a new rationalization for their continued use, coupled with repeated assertions of their legitimacy and necessity, and to see the danger of the deployment of anti-ballistic missile defence systems. This lack of progress increases the prospects of a new nuclear arms race which will threaten the existing arms control agreements and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Ridding the world of the dangers posed by nuclear weapons, pending their total abolition, is the greatest challenge of our time.

In contributing to peace and security, Indonesia has since 1957 actively participated in and contributed to the various peacekeeping operations of the United Nations. In anticipating the new and emerging problems identified by the Secretary-General and, in particular, the report (A/55/305) of the Brahimi panel, we are in the process of responding to the new requirements with a view to bolstering the numbers, quality and effectiveness of our participation in future United Nations missions.

Armed conflict and tensions persist in many parts of the world. In the Middle East we must continue to focus our attention on the core of the conflict, namely, the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people to secure their inalienable rights to self-determination and sovereign statehood in their own homeland, with Jerusalem as its capital. In this context, my delegation commends the Palestinian leaders for their statesmanlike approach. They have demonstrated their commitment to peace through the decision to share the city of Jerusalem, while remaining committed to their national rights, in order to reach a compromise. Hence, it behoves Israel to make a similar compromise so that a final settlement can be achieved. The withdrawal of Israel last June from southern Lebanon, following more than two decades of occupation, has finally restored the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Lebanon within its internationally recognized boundaries. My delegation also hopes for a resumption of the Israeli-Syrian peace talks, based on the Madrid peace formula.

In various regions of the world, however, we see many positive developments which reflect a new spirit of cooperation and compromise. These are exemplified by, among other things, the summit meeting of the two leaders of North and South Korea, the formation of a new Government in Somalia, and the ceasefire agreement between Eritrea and Ethiopia. It is my delegation's expectation that the same spirit of cooperation and compromise will prevail in easing the impact of sanctions on the people of Iraq. It is also an imperative on humanitarian grounds to address the issue of missing persons of the parties concerned during the Gulf war.

In the afterglow of the Millennium Summit and the first South Summit, which took place in August in Havana, there was a distinct sense of optimism that the enormous power and promise of globalization and the information revolution could be harnessed in the service of development and in combating poverty. In this regard, the declarations and programmes of action provide us with an excellent blueprint for charting the path ahead. Today, particularly in the developing countries, millions remain untouched by the benefits of globalization and the information revolution and, being bypassed and marginalized, can greatly provoke instability. Thus, rather than enjoying generalized peace and prosperity, the world at the turn of the century continues to be disfigured by ruthless conflicts, wrenching poverty, blatant inequalities and problems including hunger, illiteracy and disease. While declarations and programmes of action are of critical importance for changing this reality, their implementation is the key. I am convinced that there can be no alternative to productive dialogue to achieve this aim; such dialogue must be based on mutual interests and benefits, shared responsibility and genuine partnership.

One of the core issues of development on which globalization has had a great impact and which requires such dialogue is that of financing for development, an issue that has assumed immense importance in the new global economy. While enormous financial flows have characterized the global financial system, the basic problem for the majority of developing countries is that they are not in a position to benefit from such flows and must instead depend on official development assistance, which has sharply declined. Hence the importance of the forthcoming international high-level

event on financing for development that is to be held in 2001.

Another area in which globalization has had a great impact, one closely associated with financing for development, is the issue of the indebtedness of the developing countries which often seriously undermines their development efforts, particularly in this era of globalization. Regrettably, the numerous debt strategies and initiatives employed over the years have failed to resolve this problem.

Equally important in this age of information is the need to harness the potential of the information and communication technologies in the service of development. Progress was made in placing this critical issue on the agenda of the United Nations when for the first time the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council this year considered information and communication technologies (ICT) for development as its major theme. The outcome, particularly the ministerial declaration, underlined the critical importance of unlocking the vast potential of information and communication technologies for all humanity.

More than ever before, due largely to globalization, we must strive for sustainable development as set out in Agenda 21, adopted in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The outcome of that Conference committed the international community to meet the economic needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the planet to provide for the needs of future generations. But almost a decade later, with the exception of a number of conventions that have been enacted, relatively little has been achieved in fully implementing Agenda 21, known as Rio+10. It is therefore important that we seriously prepare for the ten-year review of its implementation. In doing so we should be able to generate the highest political commitment to help to ensure the full implementation of the Agenda. In this regard, I am pleased to inform the Assembly that Indonesia's offer to host Rio+10 has been strongly supported by the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development of Asia and the Pacific.

Only a short time ago the five-year reviews were held on the Copenhagen conference on social development and the Beijing conference on women. From those two special sessions we learned valuable lessons. We learned that for many people social development remains an elusive goal and that only through gender equality and women's empowerment can true prosperity be achieved.

Clearly the time has come to move beyond rhetoric and fully implement the commitments of the various international conferences of the 1990s. We must also work towards eradicating ethnic and racial discrimination, religious intolerance and xenophobia, which threaten to undermine all progress — political, economic and social. The forthcoming World Conference against Racism in 2001 therefore presents an opportunity that must be seized.

We are committed to ensuring that humanitarian assistance is available wherever and whenever needed throughout the world. The plight of refugees and displaced persons must continue to hold a prominent position on the global agenda, with each nation meeting its responsibilities to render aid and assistance in times of natural disaster, civil conflict or other emergency situations.

We must work also to ensure the integrity of humanitarian missions. The murder of staff of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Atambua, West Timor, has shocked and saddened the world, and nowhere more than Indonesia. That humanitarian workers should become victims in the performance of their work is unacceptable. Let me be clear in stating that this crime should not go unpunished. The necessary measures must be taken to ensure that such a heinous crime is never again repeated. This tragedy should not, however, result in a withdrawal of humanitarian assistance, thus compounding the loss. We should work together to resolve any and all obstacles to the safe delivery of humanitarian assistance.

International cooperation in the millennium is unavoidable and indispensable. The quality, extent and timeliness of such cooperation will make the difference between despair and progress. In this setting, the significance of the United Nations should be evident and accepted. Preserving the role of the Organization requires the participation of all Member States, large and small. Beyond declarations, it is time to translate our ideas into action. Achievement is required in the twenty-first century. That was the message of the Millennium Summit.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The next speaker is His Excellency Mr. Modibo Sidibé,

Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mali and for Malians Abroad.

Mr. Sidibé (Mali) (*spoke in French*): At the outset I should like to congratulate the President most warmly on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session. I take the opportunity to assure him of my delegation's full support as he carries out his difficult but uplifting task. I feel sure that with his experience and abilities as an able diplomat he will successfully guide our discussions.

I should also like to extend my sincere and warm congratulations to his predecessor, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Namibia, for the ability and authority he demonstrated throughout the fifty-fourth session.

I also take this opportunity of extending once again to Secretary-General Kofi Annan our full appreciation and support for his constant efforts and resolve to find a better world in spite of the many complex challenges in the new millennium. His excellent report, "We the peoples: the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century", is evidence of this.

Mali welcomes Tuvalu to the Assembly. Its admission to membership further strengthens the universality of the Organization.

More than ever before, our world aspires to peace and security and sustainable human development. In this respect, our fifty-fifth session is unprecedentedly important both historically and politically. The exceptional opportunity offered us in the Millennium Summit, which has renewed our hope in humankind, must not be lost. The Millennium Declaration demonstrates our maturity and our elevated sense of responsibility for the future of humanity. Now we must build this better world to which we all aspire. The peoples of the United Nations look to us. They are impatient. More than ever before they want to be actors determining their own future, particularly people who do not have very much, our people. They want to be actors and to benefit from globalization.

That is how I see the historical and political meaning of this session, which must give effect to the dynamic now under way. Here, all together, we reaffirm the place and the role of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security and in cooperation for development, which require that the United Nations become more legitimate by being more democratic and stronger. What I say will be set against this backdrop.

The maintenance of international peace and security must remain our priority. The Organization is increasingly faced with violent, deadly internal conflicts that have taken the lives of millions of civilians. It is therefore crucial to improve the system of prevention and strengthen our institution's capacity to organize and conduct operations effectively and successfully. Here I pay tribute to the report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, led by Lakhdar Brahimi. It is indeed a milestone in the process of trying to make the United Nations "truly credible as a force for peace" (A/55/305), so we must quickly ensure that it has positive results. As the report rightly emphasizes, United Nations intervention must be decided upon on the basis of uniform criteria, regardless of the region in which conflicts occur. The multidisciplinary nature of new United Nations peacekeeping missions demands clear and precise mandates.

Mali welcomes efforts to strengthen cooperation with regional organizations in regard to maintaining peace, while respecting the competence of the Security Council. Recent events in Sierra Leone remind us of this and are a real challenge to us. Efforts by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and subregional organizations must be supported to establish regional capacity. This also applies to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which already has a peacekeeping force and will soon have an early warning system.

Peacekeeping operations cannot be a permanent solution to conflicts or an answer to the underlying causes. The international community must move from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention based on a multidimensional approach, helping to save many human lives and making additional resources available for development. We must also emphasize that the effectiveness of the United Nations in peacekeeping depends largely on its capacity for prevention, crisis management and peace-building. Here I appeal to the international community to provide a stable and healthy financial base for the Organization's peacekeeping activities.

I pay tribute to the second Security Council summit held on 7 September, which dealt with the need to give the Council an effective role in the maintenance of international peace and security, particularly in Africa. The resolution that emerged from that summit deserves the support of us all, for it will certainly strengthen our capacity for prevention and crisis management.

We must also continue work to free the world from the fear of weapons of mass destruction and face up to the threat of light weapons.

With regard to nuclear non-proliferation, the indefinite extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) regime, the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the signing and ratification of many other treaties on important aspects of disarmament, and the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones, are all important contributions to confidence-building and nuclear disarmament.

Mali is fully committed to work to halt the plague of the proliferation of light weapons. I appeal for greater coordinated support for regional efforts, including support for moratoriums, respect for embargoes on arms deliveries and the strengthening of controls. The United Nations conference in 2001 on this issue must give the international community an opportunity to take appropriate steps to end the excessive destabilizing accumulation of such weapons. The conference must look at all aspects and be fully transparent.

I must mention here the troubling issue of children affected by conflict, child soldiers, for the link between the proliferation of light weapons and the intolerable fate of these children is only too obvious. We have a great responsibility for them, and we must put an end to the destruction of so many hopes. The International Conference on War-affected Children, held in Winnipeg, which ended just a few days ago, was an opportunity for us all to strengthen our commitment to guarantee all children better health, school for all, both boys and girls, free from war, violence and famine.

At the beginning of the third millennium one of the most urgent tasks facing humanity is to end the growing inequality between rich and poor countries. We must tackle the underlying causes of conflict — primarily their economic and social dimensions. In an international environment that is increasingly marked by globalization, continuing poverty is our most difficult challenge. The problem of the debt of the developing countries must remain our focus, because it is a major obstacle to their development. Complete cancellation of the debt is needed in the overall framework of finding a new development strategy.

This new development strategy involves direct investment, unhampered access to markets through special, differential treatment, fair prices for our goods, and transfers of new technology, all of which are major factors in development. This means that financing development must remain on our agenda. My delegation welcomes the convening in 2001 of a high-level conference to deal with this issue at the intergovernmental level. The challenges of development cannot be taken up unless there is a stable international financial system. My country advocates a reform of the international financial system that takes account of the social dimension of development and does not jeopardize nations' capacity to pursue their national development objectives.

Africa has understood full well that its role and place in the emerging world implies a renewed political approach of integration and unity of our continent. That is the backdrop to the creation of the African Union, which calls for a united Africa, strengthened by an integrated development of its full potential and a heightened awareness of its strategic advantages. Mali was the first country to ratify the Constitutive Act of the Union, which we are convinced is the springboard for the development of the continent, and for a responsible Africa, an Africa that counts.

We must work together to eradicate poverty. We have a responsibility to guarantee all human beings a life of decency and dignity, with equal opportunities for all peoples. We can do this. It requires enhanced cooperation and international solidarity through a multilateral approach guided by the United Nations.

We must promote global social development, for we believe that excessive unshared wealth is a poor kind of wealth, a wealth with no social value and therefore contrary to the essence of our life.

The values that give meaning to the wealth of the world are those of democracy. Here I refer to the strong words of President Konaré, who rightly told the community of democracies conference, held in Warsaw, that the development of democracy is the basis for a world of peace, solidarity and social justice.

and that only democracy can allow each of us to shoulder the burden, but also the honour, of being a human being and serving humankind. "What an honour it is to be a human being!" he said.

The Ministerial Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa said rightly that democracy, good governance, respect for human rights, the rights of peoples, and the rule of law, are prerequisites to achieving security, stability and development in Africa. Nothing must prevent open discussion of ideas and the promotion of political pluralism. Despite inadequacies, difficulties and sometimes violent breakdowns, the democratic process is gaining ground in Africa. A democratic Africa is becoming increasingly real, but it is still a fragile reality that must be supported and helped. Mali welcomes the adoption last June by the [Community of Democracies] of the Warsaw Declaration, advocating the strengthening of cooperation among democratic countries with a view to sharing the best practices, protecting themselves against threats to democratic processes, and promoting the emergence of a partnership forum to help democracies in transition.

We must be strong against unconstitutional change of political regimes so that we can strengthen democracy. We must condemn such changes as a matter of principle and there must be consequences. President Konaré said that pressure must be credible and can only attain its goal if the international community adopts a firm consistent and constructive approach in the event of any *putsch* or attempted *coup d'état*. It must avoid encouraging those who are tempted to violate republican and democratic rules by removing any ambiguity. In this respect, the international community must be clearer and more rigorous in its approach and support the OAU which seeks to deter *putsches* by taking a clear position and by imposing political sanctions. Could this position not also be taken up in the United Nations?

Along the same lines the establishment of the International Criminal Court with the Rome Statues would be a permanent body to act against impunity. It would allow us to try those responsible for the most horrible crimes and it would also be a tool for deterrence that could contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security. Mali has already ratified the Court's Statute, thus showing that it supports the struggle against the culture of impunity and to ensure respect for human dignity.

In view of the progress in achieving some settlement in the Lockerbie matter, we would call for the definitive and immediate lifting of sanctions that are unjustly inflicting suffering on the brother people of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. We must be careful about sanctions because of the humanitarian cost involved. We must use more effective, targeted sanctions.

On the Korean peninsula we welcome the recent inter-Korean summit and the exchange visits by peoples of both countries. We welcome and support these initiatives which begin a direct dialogue between the parties involved and promote peace and stability in the Korean peninsula.

HIV/AIDS jeopardizes the future of millions of men, women and children in Africa and it is also a threat to international peace and security. A failure to deal with this would be culpable and suicidal indifference. In this connection we fully support the proposal to convene a special session of the General Assembly on AIDS.

Adapting the United Nations to the requirements of the age is absolutely essential. The challenges facing us in the political, economic and social areas force us to demonstrate creativity and realism so that we can come up with innovative and constructive suggestions and translate them into action in the true interests of our peoples. My delegation believes in the need to democratize the United Nations further, to restructure all its principal organs. Reform of the Security Council will give effect to our desire to modernize this important organ that the Charter makes primarily responsible for threats to and breaches of international peace and security. A reformed Council must be more transparent in its working methods, more democratic, more representative, more legitimate in its membership, and it must be more credible in the way it is perceived by other member States. Mali reaffirms Africa's demand for equitable distribution of seats in the two categories, pursuant to the Harare Declaration adopted by the OAU Summit of Heads of State or Government.

More than ever before the human being must be the very heart of the new millennium. The peoples expect the United Nations to promote and ensure a world of progress for all, a world of peace, a world of sharing. In this respect Mali sees the Millennium

Declaration as the fabric we can use to build a better world. Now is the time for action.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now give the floor to the next speaker, His Excellency Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, Chairman of the delegation of Qatar.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I should like at the outset to extend my congratulations to Mr. Holkeri on his election to preside over the work of this important fifty-fifth session. It is indeed important because it is the first session in the new millennium. We are confident that his experience and diplomatic capability will be, God willing, great assets in our effort to achieve the desired success. I also extend my sincere thanks to the President of the fifty-fourth session, His Excellency Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, and to his friendly country, Namibia, noting that his outstanding efforts had a tremendous impact on solving numerous difficulties and achieving good results in many matters during the past session. I should further like to express my thanks and appreciation to His Excellency, Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who tried his utmost and has not compromised, in his effort to realize the goals aspired to by all peoples of the world. We also appreciate his endeavour in preparing the report before us.

A few days ago the world witnessed a great event in time and place, hosted in this building. This very same hall was crowded with a unique assemblage of world leaders who came from every corner of the globe to attend the Millennium Summit. The attendance of so many leaders and their desire to participate signifies many things, most important of which is their firm recognition of the role of the United Nations, which represents the hope of the peoples of the world for the achievement of a peaceful coexistence that guarantees security, peace and well-being for all. The Summit Declaration has deeply impressed us all. We trust that the role of the United Nations will grow stronger when States, particularly the great Powers, look beyond their narrow, short-lived interests, work in the interests of this Organization, and firmly abide by its Charter for the settlement of disputes by peaceful means and by resorting to the international judicial system. That would be a civilized demonstration of the progress achieved by nations and an acknowledgement of the significance and fairness of the rule of law, which is an instrument of security and peace, whose decisions deserve respect and full obedience.

We, in the State of Qatar, under the leadership of Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, the dearly beloved Emir of the country, give the United Nations and all its international organizations their due appreciation and respect as part of the philosophy of our system, which is based on truth and justice, both internally and externally. We consider democracy and human rights to be essential targets that we strive to attain according to our special cultural, religious and social characteristics. We thank God that we are aiming in the right direction.

As the Assembly is well aware, we live in a region that has for two decades been plagued by disasters and crises. No sooner does one problem calm down than another erupts like an active volcano. But many good people from the Arab Gulf, and honourable people and lovers of peace from other parts of the world, are trying their best to establish security in a region of great importance to present civilization, as the region has embedded in it a sizeable portion of the sources of energy needed by all. No sooner had the Iraqi-Iranian war, which devastated the region and left it with bleeding wounds, come to an end and people had hopes of a period of rest during which the wounds could be healed, than another crisis occurred, greater in dimensions and more complex this time, namely, the second Gulf War, the invasion of Kuwait and its liberation and the economic boycott of Iraq, which has gone on for a decade so far, killing people, particularly children, the ill and the ageing. All of us now know that the sanctions have failed to achieve the goal for which they were established. Their course has changed so much that they have become like a plague afflicting people. Not only do we call for the lifting of sanctions imposed on Iraq and putting an end to the suffering of its people, but also for a reconsideration of the issue of imposing sanctions, whether by individual States or through the United Nations, for recourse to sanctions has completely failed, leaving behind merely rancour and hatred.

In referring to the humanitarian situation in Iraq and realizing that humanitarian matters are indivisible, we welcome the Secretary-General's appointment of Yuli Vorontsov to be his representative regarding the fate of Kuwaiti prisoners and missing persons, so as to bring this phase of human suffering to an end. The State of Qatar sincerely hopes that through concerted bilateral and regional efforts a solution will be found to

the problem of prisoners and missing persons, whether they be our Kuwaiti or Iraqi brothers.

In this context I should like to note that last year my Government welcomed the positive development and the progress that had been made for the settlement of the "Lockerbie" question. We commend the cooperation and positive response by the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and its fulfilment of its obligations. On the other hand, we emphasize the necessity and inevitability of lifting the sanctions imposed on Libya, which had been temporarily suspended, because the whole issue had been referred to a court following the extradition of the two Libyan suspects. Consequently, there is no longer legal justification for the continuation of such sanctions.

The principle of dialogue or recourse to the international judicial system referred to at the beginning of my address, fully applies to the dispute between the Emirates and Iran over the occupied islands. The State of Qatar strives, within the tripartite committee established by the Gulf Cooperation Council, which includes our sister States the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman, to reach a solution acceptable to both parties through bilateral dialogue or recourse to international arbitration.

Similarly the Middle East question is foremost in our priority concerns. An endeavour to solve this question was launched but it faced obstacles and impediments that prevented the attainment of the much-sought-after peace based on legitimate international resolutions, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which were the foundations of the peace process. The Arabs consider peace their strategic option, yet a comprehensive peace is still beyond reach, owing to Israeli intransigence, inflexibility and disregard of the basic rights of the Arab nation. This intransigence was an impediment to peace on the Syrian-Lebanese track. Israel's refusal to withdraw to the 4 June 1967 borders did not meet the minimum conditions placed by the Syrian Arab Republic, consistent with United Nations resolutions. Simply because of a few metres Israel wasted a rare chance for peace.

The situation on the Palestinian track, which is the core and crux of the dispute in the region, is no better. At the Camp David summit the Government of Israel proved that it was captive to the extremist wing of its people and that it was not mature enough to take the brave decision of bringing to an end a conflict that has lasted for half a century. Moreover, Israel's insistence on the occupation of East Jerusalem is provocative to the feelings of millions of Muslims and Christians throughout the world. Israel must abide by Security Council resolution 242 (1967), on the basis of which the peace process was launched and which calls for its withdrawal from all Arab lands to the borders of 4 June 1967. Furthermore, the conflict will not come to an end without solving the question of Palestinian refugees, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

This leads to the question of Israeli settlements in occupied Arab territories. These settlements are time bombs standing in the way of any resolution to the conflict. Extremist Zionists planted these settlements to block any peaceful solution, in contradiction of numerous General Assembly and Security Council resolutions that explicitly declare them illegitimate. The State of Qatar, declaring its full support of the legitimate Arab demands on the Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian tracks, hopes that the voice of reason, love and peace will eventually prevail, that a just and lasting peace in the Middle East will be achieved, and that an independent Palestinian state, ruling over all Palestinian national territory with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, will be established. The United States of America, whose efforts in the peace process are appreciated, is called upon more than at any time in the past, to exert pressure on Israel to respond to the challenges of peace and not miss this historic opportunity as a result of narrow, short-lived ambitions; the alternative to the peace process is too dangerous for international peace and security, and could lead us all into a maze whose outcome would be known only to God.

The State of Qatar supports attempts made at national reconciliation in our sisterly State, the Sudan, and endorses the efforts of the Sudanese Government in this respect, and hopes that goodwill and sincerity will lead to consensus so that people's efforts will be directed towards development and reconstruction. At the same time it requests that foreign parties refrain from prolonging the crisis at the expense of the brotherly people of the Sudan, who pay the price with illness, hunger and blood.

We also support the tireless efforts of the President and the Government of Djibouti to solve the elusive and chronic Somali problem, and thank God

that those efforts have been fruitful. Here we extend our congratulations to His Excellency, President Abdikassim Salad Hassan, the elected Somali President. We wish him and his Government every success. We assure him that he will find in the State of Qatar the necessary help and support in order to sail the boat of national reconciliation safely to land. We also hope that our Somali brothers will help treat each other's wounds, put an end to the chaos and destruction that has befallen their country for a decade, and respond to the hopes and aspirations of their people, who dream of security, peace and a life of honour and freedom, like all peoples of the world.

This leads us to the entire region of the Horn of Africa, where war, drought and famine have inflicted untold suffering on its people, with whom we have relations of kinship and neighbourhood. We wish them stability and every good, and we hope that their efforts will be directed towards action and construction.

The State of Qatar looks closely and with concern at what is plotted against our sisterly State, Indonesia, the most populous Muslim State and one that has a prominent place in the minds of all Muslims. Intrigues are being secretly contrived to dissect this peaceful Muslim State under the pretext of human rights and other means of deception that fool nobody. We emphasize our strong and unreserved support for the sovereignty of Indonesia over all its territories, and for its territorial integrity and national unity. Events in Indonesia constitute a domestic affair, the like of which occurs in many States in the world. The Indonesian Government, God willing, is capable of putting an end to such problems among its citizens, regardless of their race, religion or orientation. We realize too that financial difficulties and poverty are among the main factors of these internal problems.

It is hoped that this session, the first in the new millennium, will give us a strong impetus to reflect on our world today with all its disparities embodied in the daily life of hundreds of millions of people. A close scrutiny of the world will reveal a rich, developed North enjoying prosperity, democracy, economic stability and ample opportunities for creativity and innovation, and a poor South, many of whose States try hard to catch up with the march of civilization and progress and utilize all their capabilities for the development of their infrastructures and the advancement of their people. However, other States of the South continue to suffer from war and conflict both between States and among citizens of the same country, thus causing their suffering to increase and their resources to be wasted on acquiring weapons instead of being used for education, health and the building of infrastructures.

Since economic factors contribute enormously to the continuation of wars and disputes, it is incumbent upon us to solve the causes of these crises. That can only be achieved with the cooperation of all, particularly the rich States of the North. Foremost among those crises are indebtedness and the accumulation of interest that exhaust the income of many States of the South. We hope that the States of the North and their creditor institutions will respond to the numerous appeals to write off, either wholly or partially, the debts or interest of the poorest countries which strive to upgrade their fragile economies. We must also conduct a comprehensive review of the international banking system by holding an international conference in which all countries of the world participate, with the aim of establishing a wise, fair and just pilot policy for the world economy in the new millennium, taking into consideration the issue of development in third world countries and directing investment and capital towards the establishment of a genuine partnership that promotes such development.

Globalization has impacted every region and transformed the world into a small village, no part of which can be separated from the other parts. Therefore, the transfer of technology, especially information and communications technology, must be accompanied by transparent globalization, rather than selective globalization wherein third world countries are no more than markets for the products of developed countries and large corporations.

The process of reforming the United Nations attracts the attention of all States, and I have referred to it on other occasions at past sessions. The Secretary-General's efforts are outstanding in this respect. For the realization of an active Organization responding harmoniously to contemporary requirements, its work has to be activated, the number of its employees who drain its resources has to be cut back, and the dynamics of its work, both at Headquarters and in its bodies, organs and offices elsewhere, have to be changed.

Moreover, the process of reforming the Security Council requires the Working Group to proceed until it achieves the goal for which it was established. The

Working Group has indeed gone a long way in that respect, particularly with regard to the second cluster relating to procedural matters in the work of the Council. As for expanding the Council and increasing its membership, the State of Qatar is committed to the position of the Arab Group and the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement that calls for a minimum increase of up to 26 members, taking into consideration equitable geographical distribution and the fact that the last increase in its membership took place in 1963. We also endorse the continuation of the Working Group, which, God willing, will reach a consensual solution. At the same time we emphasize the right of the Arab world to a permanent seat in any impending increase.

A few terms and ideas have recently gained currency, and though they sound good they imply a great threat to States and nations. Danger is not inherent in these terms but is rather a consequence of their interpretation or application. Intervention in humanitarian cases is one of these ideas that can be exploited by the great Powers to justify interference in the internal affairs of States and the violation of their national sovereignty. Promotion of democracies in the world, the code of conduct and good governance are all relative, and if they were to be used according to their present interpretation, the world would run according to a single style of democracy and one culture would prevail. This is so serious that it would eliminate pluralism, which is an enriching factor in the work of the United Nations, since it indicates diversity and difference among peoples and nations. This very same diversity contributes positively to world interests, promotes humanitarian and cultural exchanges and enables each of us to accept other cultures and coexist with them. True democracy is one that is freely chosen by any people for its mode of governance without outside intervention.

The year 2001, the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, may offer us a good opportunity to demonstrate more tolerance and communication among nations for the benefit of humanity. I should like here to refer to the address by His Highness, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, the beloved Emir of Qatar, on 5 September 2000 when the dialogue among civilizations initiative was launched, and to His Highness's emphasis on the significance of dialogue and communication as an alternative to dispute and conflict.

Peacekeeping forces play a very important role, establishing security and stability in many different regions suffering from conflict and war, and as time passes, the cost of operating these forces rise. At this session the Fifth Committee will discuss the issue of contributions to these forces. We maintain that the Fifth Committee is the best forum for this, but since this process is linked to Members' assessed contributions to the regular budget, we believe that finalizing the scale of assessments first is a reasonable priority. Our delegation will actively take part in the work of that Committee with the aim of reaching a consensus, without which we cannot find a solution to the problem of committing any State to something it cannot meet in the future. We stress that all aspects of the economic situation of each State should be considered, particularly the emerging economies that rely on one source of income and that are subject to market volatility. My country is one of those States.

Finally, the State of Qatar firmly believes in the importance of the role of the United Nations in establishing security, stability and peace throughout the world, and it also believes in the importance of respecting the United Nations Charter and its lofty goals, and the need to adhere to the Charter in international relations. We trust and hope that the future will be bright, when all peoples of the globe will realize their goals and aspirations and will positively contribute to the process of building, development and innovation.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Alhaji Sule Lamido, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nigeria.

Mr. Lamido (Nigeria): Please allow me to share with Mr. Holkeri the joy of his election to the presidency of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. He can rest assured of Nigeria's support and cooperation. May I also express the same sentiment on behalf of the Group of 77. To his predecessor and my colleague, His Excellency Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab of Namibia, Nigeria and the Group of 77 wish to express our pride in and appreciation of the most distinguished manner in which he discharged his duties as the President of the fifty-fourth session. We are indeed very proud of him.

May I also commend the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the manner in which he has piloted

and continues to manage the affairs of the United Nations. I would also like to thank him for his millennium report, which has identified some of the pressing problems and challenges facing mankind.

In the past few weeks here at the United Nations a lot of reflection and deep thinking have taken place among world leaders, all in an attempt to more coherently define the future. The end of one millennium and the beginning of another warrant all these efforts to find such a purposeful definition. Fifty-five years ago the United Nations was formed as a global bulwark against armed conflict on a world scale, such as the Second World War. Over the years its mandate of preserving international security has broadened from strictly preventing such armed conflict to cover also fundamental issues of socio-economic security for humanity. For example, in many of the developing countries the United Nations manifests its potential more through the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and other agencies than in Security Council resolutions, comparatively speaking. It is also from the activities of these United Nations agencies that the underprivileged sectors of poor countries benefit directly, activities from which these same countries, including those in Africa, have come to imbibe the idealism regarding the United Nations ability to harmonize the totality of progress to the benefit of all human stakeholders.

To a great extent this idealism has not been misplaced. In fact, at no other time has the possibility of a global family been more real than now. This prospect must, I am sure, have been very exciting to so many of us and must have been the basis for hailing the United Nations system for its own role in and contribution to these achievements. But as my President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, aptly observed here less than two weeks ago,

> "Although the world has generally become a safer place to live in, thanks to the contributions of the United Nations, we must all feel deeply worried that the message of hope which the Organization has been spreading is yet to reach the millions of humankind for whom it is intended. For the vast majority of our peoples, grinding poverty has remained a fact of their everyday existence." (*A/55/PV.7*)

This reality of grinding poverty has raised considerable apprehension in some United Nations Member States about their fate in the new millennium. There is a clear basis for this apprehension, given that the past millennium was, for most of these countries, characterized by extreme poverty, heavy indebtedness, wars of attrition and the resultant mass ordeal and anguish for both their immediate and distant victims, absolute vulnerability to epidemics such as cholera, malaria and typhoid, the rage of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the scourge of natural disasters, serious technological backwardness and a digital divide between them and the others, and by profound economic decline and infrastructural decay. In the last decade in particular, whatever hopes were raised by some initiatives aimed at mitigating African and third world underdevelopment have dwindled to nothing as the world emerged from the cold war into a more problematic concept called globalization.

The globe, which is the symbol or logo of the United Nations, depicts humanity. From the word "globe" has been derived a phenomenon called globalization, which explicitly connotes a world without national borders, with particular reference to commerce, in which humanity is one huge market. Apart from thus unfortunately associating the noble and emotive word "humanity" with the materialism of commerce and the market, globalization automatically raises other questions for three quarters of humanity outside the orbit of industrial competence.

In a global economy all the actors in that economy should also be stakeholders. But what stake does Africa have in a global economy? Economically, it is heavily indebted, some of its countries committing up to 55 per cent of gross earnings to debt servicing and payment. What can the little that is left do for the domestic economy? What does an economy that produces virtually nothing in industrial terms have to offer, and, moreover, how can it compete in a global economy? What is the income level of the average African, relative to that of his or her counterparts in many countries of the West, vis-à-vis the capacity to patronize the goods and services which globalization offers? How does globalization facilitate democratic consolidation? How can the core values of liberal democracy, such as the rule of law, the preservation of human rights and good governance, be sustained by a Government that lacks the resources to competently provide a minimum of social service delivery and thus

sustain legitimacy and regime credibility? In what ways would a typical regime in Africa be able to contribute its quota to democratic consolidation with the debt overhang, the exchange and interest rate practices in the international financial architecture, the prices offered for raw materials relative to the prices of industrial goods and services, the limited trade access and the conditionalities tied to loans and aid?

As a responsible member of the international community and as the chair of the G-77, Nigeria is obliged to draw attention to the context of our present situation. What is clear to me now is that the dream of a global family cannot be attained if the present world architecture of power and the reward system continues. The dialogue of the Organization of African Unity, the Non-Aligned Movement and the G-77 with the G-8 countries has so far shown that a great deal can be achieved from that approach to the issues in question. As President Obasanjo again said in a separate speech, it is imperative for the world to seize this moment to begin to get the future right, since such a solemn moment in the history of mankind as the recent Millennium Summit, may not always present itself. We are talking of dialogue that takes the issues on board in a holistic manner, as opposed to the current practice of abstracting merely one or other manifestation of the system — for example, in the case of wars of attrition and the idea of international humanitarian intervention.

The debate so far has brought to the fore the problem of the contradiction between sovereignty and intervention. Of course, nation States, even those on the verge of evaporation, would be sensitive to the word "intervention". But, more than that, discussion of the issue has brought out the one-dimensional nature of the treatment of some issues or problems in terms of what we include in or exclude from the definition. In this particular case, the debate so far has concentrated on war situations or armed conflicts featuring massive loss of life.

What of other situations where loss of life is also of a serious magnitude but not as a result of war or armed conflict? What of the silent genocide occasioned by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, epidemics and natural disasters such as famine, drought, flood, etc.? What about the situation that arises when sanctions lead to deaths on a serious scale? All these should find a place in a proper and systematic discussion of humanitarian intervention aimed at giving succour to those who may be trapped in tragedies other than wars.

Similarly, is there no other way by which the world can arrest the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Africa and other parts of the South? Certainly the world knows about the nature and types of weapons used in the prosecution of these wars, where they are manufactured and by whom, the processes by which they are traded and acquired and the key facilitators of these processes, including national governments and arms merchants. What if the search for solutions focused on these areas?

These and many other weighty global issues were discussed at the first ever South Summit held in Havana last April. That Summit was a defining moment for the Group of 77 countries which pondered the challenges of the twenty-first century. In Havana the South resolved to forge a new and meaningful partnership with the industrialized nations. We demanded equal partnership in decision-making that affects the whole of humanity. That was the message the leaders of the South took to the G8 Summit in Okinawa. The outcome of that consultation vividly demonstrates that meaningful partnership is a must for the new century. Certainly the interests of mankind compel a more inclusive participation of all segments of our global community.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I now give the floor to Mr. Nasser Al-Kidwa, Chairman of the Observer delegation of Palestine.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (*interpretation from Arabic*): At the outset allow me to convey to Mr. Holkeri our congratulations on his election as President of this session of the General Assembly, expressing our full confidence in him and wishing him every possible success. This session has special importance for Palestine and we hope that during its proceedings and under his leadership historic steps will be taken in our favour. I should also like to thank His Excellency Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, President of the fifty-fourth session, a fighter for freedom and a fighter for peace, for his excellent leadership during the course of the past year. I would be remiss if I failed to seize the opportunity to express our special thanks to Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, for his effective leadership and for his special interest in the situation in the Middle East and the peace process there.

As we meet in the wake of the Millennium Summit, it is incumbent upon us to seek to build upon

its outcome beginning with implementing the Millennium Declaration and adopting it as a guide for our work in the next era. This should be the case not only with regard to globalization and future social and economic issues, but also with regard to one of the main tasks not fully achieved during the past era — namely, the achievement of self-determination by peoples under colonial domination and foreign occupation. That task will not be fully achieved until Israeli occupation comes to an end and the Palestinian State has been established in accordance with international legitimacy. For us this is the step necessary to place ourselves side by side with other member States on the road to development, democracy and prosperity and so that we may be allowed to carry our small share of responsibility towards the international community and its future tasks.

As President Yasser Arafat mentioned in his address to the Millennium Summit, the Palestine Central Council met to consider the situation as the agreed date between the Palestinian and Israeli sides for reaching a final status agreement, 13 September 2000, approached; that date was also the deadline of the agreed-upon extension of the five-year interim period that originally ended on 4 May 1999. The Palestine Central Council addressed this situation with a high level of responsibility towards our people and towards the peace process and took a difficult decision seeking a balance between the natural and historic rights of the Palestinian people to their State, based on the partition resolution 181 (II) and in accordance with the Declaration of Independence of 1988 and our right to establish this State at the end of the interim period, on the one hand, and preserving what some have called the last chance for the peace process and for reaching an agreement between the two sides through an additional extension and the decision to continue the negotiations for the next five or six weeks on the other. The Council thus decided to delay the establishment of the State and at the same time mandated the Executive Committee and the presidency of the Palestine National Council and the Legislative Council to take the necessary steps in this regard, including completion of the constitutional declaration and laws for presidential and parliamentary elections, as well as the submission of an application for membership for the State of Palestine in the United Nations, followed by a report on these steps to the Central Council no later than 15 November 2000, the anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

That decision means first and foremost our desire and commitment to reach an agreement with the Israeli side if that side is truly ready for that. Secondly, it also means the agreement by the Palestinian side to postpone the establishment of the State, not only until the end of the transitional period and its extension, but until the end of the realistic opportunity for achieving a possible final agreement at the present time. We believe that no one can expect us to go beyond that and accept the continuation of the present transitional situation that is impossible to endure. We further believe that all States, including those that have advised us to postpone, will understand this and will thus be ready to provide the necessary support for our steps, including support for the application of Palestine for membership in the United Nations.

The assumption of power by the current Israeli Government was coupled with a chorus of positive voices that led to increased hope for rapid and honest implementation of the agreements signed by the two sides aimed at achieving a final agreement in the agreed time. We honestly wanted to believe this and dealt with that Government positively and with full commitment to the agreements. But the stubborn realities began to impose themselves on the ground, regardless of the wishes and the artificial positive voices. The current Government did not implement any of the provisions of these agreements except those provisions that the former Government had explicitly committed itself to in implementation of the Wye River Memorandum of October 1998. This Government has not carried out one centimetre of redeployment more than Mr. Netanyahu had committed himself to, and it has also failed to carry out the third redeployment. Illegal settlements, which are destructive to the peace process, have continued, even in Jabal Abu Ghneim, which was the reason the General Assembly convened its tenth emergency special session. A number of other illegal measures and practices have also continued, creating a negative and tense climate. Amidst all of that, final status negotiations started and we witnessed Israeli foot-dragging and procrastination that we could not understand and that has led to more doubts and tension.

Then came the Camp David Summit, for which thorough preparation was needed before being convened, something that was not accepted by the Israeli side. Despite everything, the Summit represented a very important opportunity to move into

a new, serious phase of negotiations through the personal involvement of President Bill Clinton and his Secretary of State and the rest of his team. We highly appreciate all the efforts made for the success of the Summit. For our part, we spared no effort in the same direction. However, we believe that Israel's lack of readiness to comply with the terms of reference of the peace process prevented the success of such efforts.

In the wake of the Summit a campaign was launched by some parties and some biased media organizations to absolve the Israeli side of its responsibility and to place undue pressure on the Palestinian side. For example, some say that the Israeli side progressed from its original positions during the negotiations more than the Palestinian side. That is factually incorrect, in addition to being the wrong yardstick to apply. It is incorrect because the Palestinian side has progressed from its original position more than the Israeli side, but that happened with the start of the peace process and the acceptance of the bases of such a process. The Palestinian side has accepted, despite the historic injustice, establishing its State in accordance with the partition plan, which gave us less than half of mandated Palestine, and has accepted as the basis for settlement Security Council resolution 242 (1967), which gives us less than a quarter of mandated Palestine. Is there a more momentous concession than this? Is it possible to forget that and only look at positions taken during the Camp David negotiations, regardless of the past?

It is also the wrong yardstick to apply because the appropriate yardstick should be the closeness of the sides to the agreed basis of the peace process and their commitment to Security Council resolution 242 (1967), the implementation of which is the goal of the peace process, and not the extent of their movement from original positions, especially if such positions were illegal and irrational. Needless to say, the Palestinian side has fully adhered to this resolution and has never attempted to circumvent it, whereas the Israeli side has never stopped pursuing positions violating that resolution and aiming to usurp more and more Palestinian land and rights.

Let us have another look at the positions of the parties on some specific issues, so that all may be aware of the details of the situation. With regard to Jerusalem, the first *kiblah* and the third of the holy sanctuaries and the cradle of Jesus Christ, the other side claims that it made substantial concessions while the Palestinians did not. It also claims that we have not shown enough sensitivity towards the holy sites pertaining to Judaism. All of this is incorrect. The signed agreements state that Jerusalem will be an issue for negotiation, which means the whole of Jerusalem — occupied East Jerusalem and West Jerusalem, which is under de facto Israeli control. For our part, we have accepted that West Jerusalem shall be under Israeli sovereignty and become the capital of Israel. We have demanded the end of the occupation of East Jerusalem so that it may come under Palestinian sovereignty and be the capital of Palestine. We have accepted that the city shall be open, and have accepted all kinds of guarantees for freedom of conscience, worship and access to all holy places under Palestinian sovereignty. In return for such flexibility, Israel is not satisfied with recognized sovereignty over West Jerusalem, but seeks also to usurp parts of occupied East Jerusalem.

With regard to the Jewish holy places, we fully respect their sacredness, and Islam recognizes the three monotheistic religions — Judaism, Christianity and Islam — and all their prophets. Thus, we have shown every possible flexibility, even with regard to those places on lands in occupied East Jerusalem, to which resolution 242 (1967) is applicable. We have accepted that the Western Wall of Al-Haram Al-Sharif, which is known to the Arabs and Muslims as Al-Buraq Wall and to the Israelis and Jews as the Wailing Wall, shall be placed under Israeli control, bearing in mind its sacredness to Judaism and consistent with the situation since the British mandate on Palestine. In return for our flexibility Israel not only seeks sovereignty over the Western Wall, but further challenges our sovereignty over Al-Haram Al-Sharif and seeks to maintain some form of sovereignty over it, something that will not be accepted by any Palestinian, Arab or Muslim leader, not now and not in the future.

We have recently taken a major additional step in this regard by indicating our readiness to accept a certain mechanism for ensuring that no excavations are conducted under Al-Haram Al-Sharif, or even our readiness to accept Muslim sovereignty over Al-Haram Al-Sharif through the Al-Quds Committee of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). This represents the utmost that can be done in terms of dealing with an Arab and Muslim trust over Palestinian land.

With regard to another important issue, namely, Palestinian refugees and their rights, the Palestinian side has upheld their rights in accordance with international law, like any other refugees in the world, and in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions, in particular resolution 194 (III), including their right to return and to compensation. At the same time, we have shown our readiness to accept specific implementation mechanisms to be agreed upon. In return for our flexibility, Israel refuses to recognize its responsibility for this human tragedy and refuses to recognize the rights of the refugees, including their right to return, and wants only to compensate them, and even that at the expense of others and not in its capacity as the party that seized their lands and properties. Yesterday the Assembly heard Israel's spokesman repeat what has been said, attempting not only to deny Israel's responsibility but also denying the individual property of the refugees, more than 5.5 million dunams of land, legal and full property of individuals. The Acting Foreign Minister attempted to put an end to that in an address to the Assembly.

The third important issue is that of settlements and borders. We have affirmed that settlements are illegal and must not be built on Palestinian lands. Furthermore, Israel must withdraw to the armistice lines of 1949, which are commonly known as the lines of 4 June 1967. At the same time, and in order to resolve some of the demographic problems illegally created by Israel, we have shown our readiness to accept changes in the border lines on the basis of full reciprocity. In return for such flexibility, Israel still attempts to appropriate more land and to annex other parts of occupied Palestinian territory. However, we generally feel, or at least hope, that the differences on this and the remaining issues are less sharp than the differences I indicated regarding the two previous ones, and it is hoped this might signify a real change in the Israeli position regarding all issues.

We have not lost hope yet. We are still committed to the peace process and to serious and continuous negotiations in the coming weeks. Yet this morning we were surprised to hear the spokesman of the Israeli Government announce that the negotiations are suspended. We hope that the Israeli positions are tactical and that the Israeli side will in the final analysis respect its commitment to the bases of the peace process. We want an agreement, an agreement that will remove us from the cycle of confrontation and that will carry forward both sides, and the entire region and its future generations, to a new era. Such an agreement must be balanced, reasonable and based on international law, the basis of the peace process. This requires a continuation of the necessary efforts and unbiased support of the two cosponsors of the peace process, particularly the United States of America, other concerned parties in the region, the European Union and interested parties throughout the world. We are ready and look forward to such a historic agreement between the two States, Palestine and Israel.

During the Millennium Summit much was said about the United Nations and its past and future role. We wish to add that the United Nations is indispensable when it comes to the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East. We have always emphasized the permanent responsibility of the United Nations for the question of Palestine until it is effectively resolved in all its aspects, and while we always called for more United Nations involvement in the Middle East peace process, others have attempted to exclude and neutralize it. We are convinced that in the coming decisive period the role of the United Nations will become more important, no matter what the circumstances. If we were, God forbid, to arrive at a dead end despite all our strenuous efforts for the success of the peace process, then we would come to the United Nations and expect to receive its protection and support. We will work to obtain membership and to contribute to the resolutions of the United Nations, the established committees and the relevant programmes so that all might provide an additional boost for the achievement of our people's legitimate rights, including their right to the establishment of their independent State with Jerusalem as its capital, after such a long period of trial and tribulation.

If our hope is fulfilled and we are successful in reaching a final agreement with our neighbours, then we expect that the need for the United Nations and its organs will be greater. The United Nations responsibility in all its forms will continue until the end of the implementation period and there will be a need to legitimize some aspects of the agreement and perhaps to complement them. There will also be a need for United Nations assistance during the implementation period with regard to many aspects, in particular with regard to Palestinian refugees, including the continuation of the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the

Near East. We will then propose the specific reactivation of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine, which was established by resolution 194 (III) and is composed of the United States, France and Turkey, and the use of the records of the Commission related to land ownership in Palestine. These records were updated by the United Nations Secretariat, in cooperation with the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and can now be used. In any case, the need for the United Nations will increase, and we call for preparedness for that eventuality.

There are other aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict that must be resolved in order for a comprehensive peace to be achieved in the region. In this context, we reaffirm the necessity of reactivating the Syrian-Israeli track of the peace process as well as the need for Israel to accept the principle of full withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Arab Golan to the lines of 4 June 1967. We declare our solidarity with our sister country, Syria, and support its just demands, including Israeli adherence to the terms of reference of the peace process. We also express our great happiness at the Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon. We congratulate the brotherly Lebanese people on the liberation of their territories and support their other demands regarding the achievement of peace between Lebanon and Israel. In this context, we affirm our agreement with regard to rejecting the resettlement of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and the need for them to return to their homes, and, until then, we expect them to benefit from normal living conditions.

With regard to Arab national security and the principle of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, we reaffirm the need for Israel to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and to put all its nuclear facilities under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency. We also support attempts aimed at establishing a region free from weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East and believe this to be an essential condition for establishing a new reality in the region, which we all seek to achieve.

In the context of the wider Arab region, the suffering of the brotherly Iraqi people is still a source of real concern for us all. We call for a speedy end to their suffering. We also call for the total lifting of sanctions imposed on sisterly Libya and brotherly Sudan. We also call for the peaceful settlement of the issue of the three islands between the United Arab Emirates and Iran in a way that preserves the rights of the United Arab Emirates in these islands. We also express our happiness for the recent steps taken in Somalia and express our hope that the stability and reconciliation process will continue. We reaffirm the need for efforts to be made to resolve problems everywhere, including, inter alia, those of Cyprus, of the great African continent, particularly the Horn of Africa, of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of some of the surrounding countries. The resolution of such problems will represent an important contribution towards placing that continent on the road to development and progress.

Before concluding I must once again express our deep thanks to our brothers and friends everywhere, particularly to fraternal Arab countries, Islamic countries and non-aligned countries, as well as to all other friends for their principled and continuous support. Let this year be the year that will bring to an end the historical injustice that has befallen our people, and let it be the beginning of a new life in the Middle East for all States, peoples and future generations.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.